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Cranston urges negotiations with Cuba

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Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Alan Cranston of California has called on the Reagan administration to move toward talks with Cuba and immediate withdrawal of the U.S. fleet from Central American waters as part of a six-point peace plan for the region.

Cranston, in a Capitol Hill press conference yesterday following his return from talks with Latin American officials of the Contadora group, said "no lasting solution can be reached without the involvement of Cuba and the United States."

The Reagan administration has refused to negotiate with Cuba, accusing the government of President Fidel Castro of supplying arms and training to leftist and Marxist insurgents throughout Latin America, with a special effort to overthrow the U.S.-backed government of El Salvador.

Cranston attempted to define a Democratic policy for the region that was "centrist," comparing it to what he termed a more extreme administration policy of "Reagan gunboat diplomacy" and a "strategy of tough talk and guns" that only feeds anti-Americanism created by decades of U.S. intervention.

All six Democratic presidential

hopefuls are at variance with the Reagan administration policy in Central America. Cranston, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, yesterday tried to move ahead of that group with a set of policy alternatives.

Cranston said the Contadora group plan, drafted in July at a meeting in Mexico by officials from Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia and Panama, "is the most promising approach to achieving stability, peace and democracy in the region."

The plan focuses on demilitarization of the region, negotiations and economic aid.

"The Reagan administration," Cranston said, "is giving lip-service to the Contadora plan while actively pursuing a policy that undermines it."

Cranston urged "expanded dialogue" between the Contadora nations and Cuba with the United States "willing to participate at the appropriate point."

"The indications are that Castro is receptive and willing to explore a peaceful solution," he said. Cranston would not say whether special envoy Richard Stone or Henry Kissinger, head of the administration's Central America study commission, should deal directly with the Cubans now.

"Our aim would be to end all foreign arms supplies to the region, to remove

all foreign military advisors, and promote pluralism and democratic elections," Cranston said.

Parts of the Contadora plan are reflected in Cranston's proposals which call for an immediate halt to all covert and overt aid to the "Contras" — guerrillas seeking to overthrow the Sandinista government of Nicaragua.

He called them "ex-Somoza national guardsmen . . . who represent the worst of the last dictatorship in that country."

Cranston said there was "virtual unanimity" among Contadora leaders that the CIA-backed efforts in Nicaragua are counterproductive, allowing the Sandinistas to justify an otherwise unjustifiable military build-up, while driving the country to greater dependence on Cuba and the Soviet Union.

The United States also should pressure El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to cooperate with the Contadora group, while conditioning U.S. military aid on human rights advances, he said.

Cranston spent five days in the region where he met with the presidents and foreign ministers of three members of the Contadora group and the foreign minister of Mexico. He said that officials from Colombia and Mexico had talked personally with Castro who said he was willing to discuss the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the region.